

Approved For Release 2000/08/03 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000400030001-1

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The Charlotte Observer

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Published Morning and Sunday

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 1962

Powers' Vindication Holds Valuable Lesson For U. S.

Those who eagerly awaited the moment when U2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers would be roasted over the coals of national indignation must go elsewhere to burn their wicks.

Both the Central Intelligence Agency and a Senate committee have listened to his story and said, in effect, "Welcome home, son, all is forgiven."



POWERS

Powers emerged from his dual interrogation more in the role of hero than turncoat. An intensive debriefing by the CIA and other intelligence specialists, aeronautical technicians and experts concerned with various aspects of his mission and capture has swept away the cloud of suspicion that enveloped him.

A board of inquiry found that Powers complied with "the terms of his employment and his obligations as an American."

One fact stands out. A large segment of the American people, including much of the press, was too quick to think the worst of Powers during the spy trial in Russia. His loyalty was questioned at great injustice to him and his family.

The story emerges since his release in exchange for Soviet spy Rudolf Abel re-

veals that he followed instructions of the CIA to the extent that he could.

A review of Powers' record prior to the ill-fated flight over the Soviet Union established that he was one of the outstanding pilots in the U2 program. He was carrying out a grueling assignment when shot down and went through a harrowing experience in escaping from his plane.

These facts weren't available to the American people at the time of the incident. And this may have accounted for the tendency to believe the worst.

But maybe the people of this country have become so accustomed to self-flagellation, and so permeated by self-doubt that their attitude toward those who even accidentally fall into the hands of the enemy has become unreasonable.

An explanation may lie in the memory of defections that took place during the war in Korea, or those of two key National Security Agency employees a few years ago.

But the vindication of Powers may help overcome the habit of downgrading the Americanism of others and the under-rating of our government's internal security program.

Coming shortly after the morale-lifting performance of Marine Col. John Glenn—both in space and on the speaker's platform—it should serve to restore faith in our people and resources that is indispensable in our contest with the Communists.